



# FORUM

Facts, Outcomes, & Research... Useful for Managing

## TO SKIN A CAT

BY R. PEGGY SMITH

I'm sure many of you know that old saw "there is more than one way to skin a cat." Of course, one wonders why in the world would one want to skin a cat. Well, it might be that you went on a safari to Africa and bagged a leopard, legally of course. In this case, you would certainly want to be thorough and very careful, to make sure your new leopard rug would be fully intact and lovely. On the other hand, it could be that you are taking your beloved house cat to a veterinarian, because she has a balding spot on her back. In this case, there might be just a hurried snip or scrape taken to investigate the problem.

That's kind of the way it is with Performance Measures. There are many more than one way to measure performance. As Robert D. Behn points out (see Article of the Month), different purposes require different measures. Knowing the purpose of measuring and monitoring the indicators of performance is vital before deciding what to measure and what data to use to do so. For example, weight is a common indicator of "health." The first thing that often comes to mind is that keeping a chart of weight from week to week, looking for decreases, would be a good thing. But, if the person using weight as a health measure is newly pregnant, it would be an increase in weight she'd be looking for as an indicator of good health. Of course, it might be more important for someone to use blood pressure as his or her health indicator. Especially if that person tends to have high blood pressure and is taking medication to keep it under control.

The Department is in the process of coming up with performance measures that will be incorporated into our 2005-2011 Strategic Plan. As Department staff participates on Strategic Planning Teams, they will undoubtedly look at tried and true measures we have used for several years. Examples of these are the rate of escapes from our major facilities, the rate of violent/assault infractions in our facilities, and the average time it takes to apprehend offenders who abscond from supervision. You can look at our track record of agency performance as indicated by these measures by visiting the Planning and Research DOCNet web site (see Web Site of the Month).

There will also be new measures to help us do a better job of monitoring and describing the outcomes of our work. "So what," you ask, "is an outcome and what is an outcome measure?" Okay, another example — looking at offenders who study for their GED while in prison. We know they are educationally deficient, and we believe that educational enhancement can contribute to them becoming productive members of society. A number of them will be assigned to GED classes — that number is an input measure. Somewhat fewer of them will earn their GED while in prison — that number is an output measure. In a given year, some of those who have earned their GED in prison will be released, with better education credential than when they entered — that



## FOR YOUR INFORMATION..

### BOOK/PUBLICATION OF THE MONTH

"Why Measure Performance? Different Purposes Require Different Measures," - Robert D. Behn.

Public Administration Review: Sep/Oct 2003; 63,5, pg.586.

### WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

Review our own Performance Measures on the Planning and Research Homepage at: <http://doc-wb3/usercontents/Research/PlanningResearch/Performance/PerformanceHome.htm>

### DEFINITION OF THE MONTH

**OUTCOME MEASURE:** Information about government performance that ties performance indicators to the desired impact or goals of a service.

### DOC MONTHLY STATISTICS AS OF MAY 31, 2004

#### CONFINEMENT POPULATION ..... 17,199

Total Confinement ..... 16,297

Work Release ..... 670

Out of State Rented Beds ..... 232

#### COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS POPULATION

ACTIVE SUPERVISION ..... 31,415

RMA ..... 7,543

RMB ..... 6,463

RMC ..... 3,216

RMD ..... 11,985

Unclassified ..... 2,208

MONETARY ..... 4,280

INACTIVE STATUS ..... 16,358

### ESCAPES FROM SECURITY LEVELS 2-5, FOR FY04

	Date	Type	Return
Stafford Creek	08/29/03	Facility	08/29/03
Ahtanum View	09/01/03	Facility	09/08/03
Tacoma PR	10/29/03	Off-Site	12/16/03
MCC -Twin Rivers	11/01/03	Facility	11/09/03
Olympic	12/13/03	Facility	12/14/03
Pine Lodge PR	12/24/03	Facility	12/24/03
Airway Heights	01/04/04	Facility	01/04/04
MCC-WSR-Min	03/17/04	Facility	03/17/04
Tacoma PR	03/22/04	Facility	03/31/04
Airway Heights	03/30/04	Work Crew	-----

### TO CONTACT PLANNING AND RESEARCH

Phone: (360) 753-6180

Fax: (360) 664-8754

E-mail - PEGGY SMITH Outlook: [rpsmith@doc1.wa.gov](mailto:rpsmith@doc1.wa.gov)

P&R Homepage, under Data and Research on the DOCNET homepage

number is an intermediate outcome. The percent of offenders leaving prison in a given year, GED in hand, who obtain jobs and stay employed for the subsequent year is, an ultimate outcome measure. We believe this measure is a good indicator of being a productive member of society. Not the only one, though. Remember, "there is more than one way to skin a cat."